

The Seven Sins of Greenwashing: Environmental Claims in the Marketplace

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Greenwashing?

- The act of the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service.



A little history...

- In 2007, [TerraChoice Environmental Marketing](#) identified six patterns or “sins” in greenwashing
- In 2009, the follow-up study, the [Seven Sins of Greenwashing](#) found that of 2,219 products making green claims in the US and Canada, only 25 products were “sin-free”.

Sin of No Proof



- A claim that can't be proven through reliable third party certification or other easily accessible data

Sin of Vagueness

- So poorly defined or broad that real meaning is likely to misunderstand
- Example:
“nontoxic”



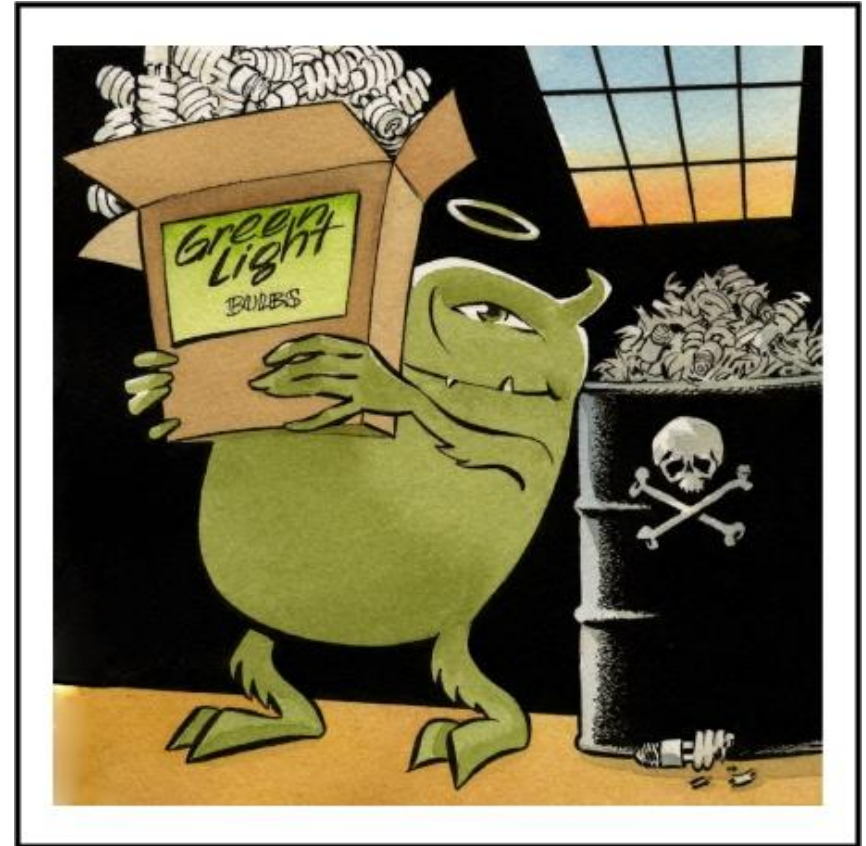
Sin of the Lesser of Two Evils



- A claim that may be strictly true, but risks distracting the consumer from the greater environmental impacts of the category as a whole.

Sin of the Hidden Trade-Off

- Suggests that a product is “green” based on narrow attributes



Sin of Irrelevance

- Claim may be truthful but is not important or helpful to purchaser



Sin of Fibbing

- Environmental claims that are simply false



Sin of Worshipping False Labels



- Gives the impression that product is certified green by independent third party organization

More meaningful product claims

- Write a letter to the company
- File a complaint:
 - the Federal Trade Commission
 - the Competition Bureau (in Canada)

New developments

- Federal Executive Orders
 - Requires EPEAT registered electronics
 - 95% of contract acquisitions
- Senator Feinstein bill
 - National eco-labeling system
- ANSI
 - Establish uniformity in product standards and criteria development

Reliable Standards and Certification Programs

- Are independent of product manufacturers
- Use a broad-based stakeholder consensus process
- Evaluate product life-cycle stages from raw materials to end-of-life
- Require on-site testing and verification
- Often incorporate performance and safety standards that the product must meet or exceed.

Green Products Certifiers



- ☐ DfE (recognition)
- ☐ Green Seal (US EcoLogo)
- ☐ Eco Logo (Canada)
- ☐ Energy Star (Energy efficiency)
- ☐ EPEAT ("Green" computers)
- ☐ Green-e (Renewable energy)
- ☐ USDA Organic/Fair Trade
- ☐ Green Guard (Low-VOC)
- ☐ Forest Stewardship Council (forestry)
- ☐ SCS (single attribute certification)
- ☐ NSF International



Thank you!



More information at Department of Ecology website:

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/beyondwaste/epp.html>